



THE COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS
EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF ENERGY AND
ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS

Department of Agricultural Resources

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Secretary

SCOTT J. SOARES
Acting Commissioner

Dairy Farm Revitalization Task Force

**Approved Meeting Minutes
October 5, 2007
Lord Jeffery Inn
Amherst, MA
12:00**

Task Force Members Present:

Ms. Lynne Bohan, Processor Representative;
Representative Daniel Bosley;
Dwayne Breger, Ph.D., Department of Health Designee;
Senator Stephen Brewer;
Mr. Mark Duffy, Farmer Representative;
Representative Lewis Evangelidis;
Ms. Ellen Fitzgibbons, Department of Public Health Designee;
William Gillmeister, Ph.D., appointee, Department of Agricultural Resources;
Undersecretary Philip Griffiths, EEA Secretary's Designee;
Senator Michael Knapik;
Representative Stephen Kulik;
Mr. Robert O'Connor, appointee Executive Office of Environmental Affairs;
Mr. David Shepard, Massachusetts Cooperative of Milk Producers Federation Representative;
Mr. Scott Soares, Acting Commissioner Department of Agricultural Resources;
Senator Stanley Rosenberg
Mr. Richard Woodger, Massachusetts Association of Dairy Farmers Representative;

Members of the public were present at the meeting

1. Call to Order

Acting Commissioner Scott Soares called the meeting into order at 12:40 p.m.

2. Approval of September 21, 2007 Meeting Minutes

Motion: Senator Rosenberg made a motion, seconded by Representative Kulik, to approve the September 21 Meeting minutes.

Discussion: Mr. Mark Duffy expressed his wish that a change be made to the page 7 discussion section of the motion submitted by Mr. Greg Watson, last paragraph, from the September 21, meeting minutes draft document. Mr. Duffy supports all farms and wants the mention that “too much emphasis is placed on organic” be modified or deleted.

Vote: Unanimous with change.

3. Old Business

a. Farm Bill resolutions

Acting Commissioner Scott Soares introduced the next item on the agenda the Farm Bill draft resolutions for review.

Motion: Representative Kulik made a motion, seconded by Senator Rosenberg, to approve the draft resolutions and that the resolutions be forwarded to Northeast representatives and that a cover letter be drafted and sent on behalf of the Secretary of EOEA and/or the Governor to accompany the resolutions.

Discussion: None

Vote: Unanimous

b. Review of draft report

Acting Commissioner Scott Soares introduced the next issue on the agenda, which was a review of the draft interim report to the legislature. He called their attention to the Findings section, page 29, section V, of the draft report document that had been distributed. He then proceeded to review each finding with the Task Force.

Finding 1: Given the circumstances, characteristics and broad array of interest within the Massachusetts dairy industry, sustainability of the industry will depend upon a variety of measures and support from consumers, dairy farmers, processors, retailers, and government.

Discussion: There were no comments on Finding 1

Finding 2: Dairy farms offer substantial benefit to the citizens of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts not only in terms of the local supply of fresh food and their contribution to the economic vitality of rural communities, but also in the aesthetic values they offer in scenic beauty, open space, and tourism;

Discussion: Senator Knapik made a recommendation that further reference to the Massachusetts economy be included in the language of the finding and that the figures in the finding be quantified in order to provide a more broad and understandable context to readers of the report.

Senator Brewer recommended that a clear statement that dairy farms preserve open space be included in the opening language of finding 2.

Mr. William Gillmeister made reference to article 97 of the Constitution and suggested that we incorporate this language into the finding.

Mr. Bob O'Connor asked if acreage could be quantified and if so this should be incorporated into the report.

Representative Evangelidis recommended that all of the other sectors that are impacted by dairy such as tourism, and other types of support businesses, be included in the language of finding 2.

Finding 3: The financial stress on dairy farms in 2006—when farm milk prices were \$13.00 per cwt and costs of production were at \$20.00 per cwt—threatened these benefits and the right of the people to the conservation, development, and utilization of agricultural resources; stabilizing the financial security of dairy farms is critical to the protection of open space;

Discussion: Mr. Mark Duffy recommended the use of gallons as the standard measure to be used not only in finding 3 but throughout the document as most people did not understand cwt as a unit of measure. Representative Kulik and Senator Brewer agreed with this recommendation.

Senator Rosenberg recommended that the finding be expanded to include the aggregate issue. He also asked that data on cycle and dip need to be obtained not only for inclusion in the language of finding 3, but also to identify the real numbers that will be necessary if a fund were to be established. He also made mention that the flavor of the language should indicate the intent that “we do not want to lose another dairy farm in Massachusetts”. Senator Rosenberg continued by stressing that the fund needs to be created and that the task to find out how much needs to go in to the fund would be fundamental as it would provide the ability to work back from that number as far as inputs, to determine who contributes to the fund, etc; and at what values.

Senator Rosenberg further recommended that the Department of Agricultural Resources (DAR) needs to do this and not a Subcommittee of the DRTF.

Undersecretary Phillip Griffiths agreed that this was a fundamental piece of information and that DAR should be responsible for this exercise.

Senator Rosenberg also asked that it be determined, as a priority, if 3, 4 or 5 years would be used for the baseline of the dip-cycle.

Mr. Woodger commented that the fund be used not only for dips but also that it should be ensured that there is enough money in the fund so that the industry continues to grow through programs that offer future generations the ability to look to dairy farming as a viable opportunity and career path.

Senator Rosenberg referenced that this may be yet another reason to continue and grow the Dairy Revitalization Task Force.

Senator Knapik made mention that perhaps the future of the Dairy Revitalization Task Force was to ensure that the fund is created, continues and is managed properly.

Mr. Mark Duffy highlighted that the support of the industry was relevant and necessary and that in some cases “We are talking about farms that have passed through generations”.

Finding 4/5: The current, 2007, situation of the Massachusetts dairy farm industry has stabilized from 2006. The cost of milk production has risen dramatically and is well over \$22.00 per cwt for many dairy farms, while at the same time, farm price paid for milk has increased dramatically from \$13.00 per cwt to over \$23.00 per cwt, which has offset the increase in costs;

Milk prices and costs of production are primarily dictated by national market forces and federal controls. Dairy industry analysts expect milk production costs to remain at these high levels for the foreseeable future, but expect the price paid to farmers to drop in the future according to a cyclical pattern of three to five years;

Discussion: It was recommended by Senator Rosenberg and agreed upon by DRTF members to incorporate findings 4 and 5 into one finding.

Undersecretary Phillip Griffiths recommended that finding 4 reflect the cyclical nature of the problem.

Mr. Mark Duffy recommended that the language “farmers should be able to make a living” be included in the language of finding 4.

Senator Knapik recommended that the international issues that are currently affecting the dairy industry of the Commonwealth also be included in the language of the finding. Representative Kulik furthered this recommendation and stated that global and national markets should also be mentioned.

Finding 6: National solutions, such as The Federal Milk Marketing Orders, while offering certain benefits, are inadequate to address the challenges facing Massachusetts dairy farmers;

Discussion: None

Finding 7: A safety-net type of mechanism needs to be established to help dairy farmers remain economically viable for the periods of cyclical down turns when costs of production exceed milk prices; such a fund will provide the financial security of dairy farms and ultimately protect working agricultural resources and preserve open space;

Discussion: Mr. Mark Duffy recommended that we need to include in the language of finding 7 that a safety-net type of mechanism is only a part of the solution.

Mr. Breger recommended that an estimate of finding 7's potential impact be included in the language, adding that pro-active effort is needed from both the government and private sectors.

Finding 8: Energy conservation and generation offer a substantial opportunity for cost savings in milk production and farm revenue generation;

Discussion: Representative Bosley recommended that aggregation should be mentioned and that there was a big opportunity for farmers to save money, with energy in particular.

Senator Rosenberg recommended to go further with a specific recommendation for a feasibility study.

Mr. Mark Duffy made mention that we need to ensure that this is one factor, but feed and other issues are also important.

Senator Brewer recommended and the task force agreed that the word *substantial* be removed from the finding.

Acting Commissioner Scott Soares suggested that the language be sent to Mr. Greg Watson for review and that mention of net metering be included in the language of the finding.

Finding 9: Regulatory inefficiencies create road blocks to technological adoption and increases costs to dairy farms;

Discussion: Senator Knapik recommended and the task force agreed that *regulatory and statutory challenges* replace "*regulatory inefficiencies*" in the language of finding 9.

Ms. Lynne Bohan recommended and the task force agreed that "*Some*" be inserted before *regulatory* to be more specific.

Undersecretary Phillip Griffiths made mention that specific Department of Environmental Protection issues that are adversely affecting dairy farms be obtained from farmers.

Finding 10: Revitalizing the dairy farm industry will require technical and financial assistance to get and keep the Commonwealth's dairy farmers on the right paths and to offer alternative paths such as on-farm processing and other direct marketing options;

Discussion: Mr. Mark Duffy mentioned that he likes to think of ourselves on the right path and made the recommendation that the language be made more positive throughout the finding. He further suggested that language such as "*while providing the opportunities*" and "*path to a viable future*" was offered as examples.

Senator Brewer recommended and the task force agreed to insert the language "but not limited to" after "such as".

Finding 11: The Task Force has developed a set of options to address these findings. It is acknowledged that some of these options shall require significantly more effort to provide the level of detail required to generate final recommendations.

Discussion: Senator Rosenberg recommended dropping finding 11. DRTF members agreed, unanimously, to drop finding 11.

Acting Commissioner Scott Soares proposed to the Task Force that a hold be placed on the transmittal of the report as stipulated by the Task Force's enabling legislation for four weeks in order to incorporate final recommendations that the Task Force will work on over the next several weeks.

Acting Commissioner Scott Soares introduced the next issue on the agenda: The review of the motions included in the section new business of the September 21 Meeting Minutes document. Acting Commissioner Scott Soares indicated that he felt it useful to use this review in order to determine action items and identify subcommittees to work on the many issues still necessary to complete the final report. He also recommended that the motions be numbered in order to facilitate their review and future reference. He then proceeded to review each motion with the Task Force.

Undersecretary Phillip Griffiths further mentioned that action items needed to come out of this exercise to fund analysis for the different studies that needed to be conducted.

Motion 1 from 9/21/07 meeting of Task Force: Representative Bosley made a motion, seconded by Representative Kulik, to amend the resolutions passed by the Council of State Governments to make them suitable for adoption by the Dairy Farm Revitalization Task Force.

Discussion: None

Subcommittees/Action Items: There were no subcommittees or action items identified.

Motion 2 from 9/21/07 meeting of Task Force: Senator Rosenberg made a motion, seconded by Representative Kulik, that the Task Force recommends the establishment of a Dairy Farmer's Stabilization Fund to be used principally to stabilize dairy farm income for the purposes of open space preservation. The Stabilization Fund shall consist of revenues from the following sources: 1) 10% of the revenues generated under section 8 of the Community Preservation Act; 2) milk dealer license fees; 3) any other gifts or volunteer payments to stabilize dairy farm income. Further, Senator Rosenberg moved that the Task Force review and recommend revisions to the milk dealer license fee including but not limited to rescinding the decision to exempt retail stores from the licensing provisions of MGL c. 94A

Discussion: The Acting Commissioner asked for Task Force members to form a subcommittee to examine the establishment of a dairy farmer's stabilization fund or safety net. Senator Rosenberg, Representative Kulik, Representative Bosley, Ms. Lynne Bohan, Mr. Mark Duffy and Mr. William Gillmeister will comprise the Safety Net Subcommittee.

Senator Rosenberg recommended that Brian Houghton of the Massachusetts Food Association also be included in the subcommittee.

Ms. Lynne Bohan inquired if anyone should be included from the consumer side. Senator Rosenberg inquired further as to who could be asked. Undersecretary Phillip Griffiths replied that the Department would work to identify a representative with the assistance of Task Force members.

Senator Rosenberg reiterated that the two parts, the number needed in terms of the total fund, and at what level are the inputs, are necessary components that need to be identified by the subcommittee as a first step.

Mr. William Gillmeister made mention that the subcommittee should also examine motions 9 and 10 as well. This was agreed upon by Task Force members unanimously.

Subcommittees/Action Items: Safety Net Subcommittee

For the study for the establishment of a Dairy Farm Stabilization Fund-(Motion 2), a review of The Fair Trade Model (Motion 9) and the Refundable Income Tax Credit (Motion 10).

Senator Stanley Rosenberg
Mr. William Gillmeister
Ms. Lynne Bohan, Processor Representative;
Representative Daniel Bosley, House of Representatives;
Representative Stephen Kulik, House of Representatives
Mr. Mark Duffy, Farmer Representative;
Mr. Brian Houghton, Massachusetts Food Association
Consumer Representative (To be named by the Department)

Motion 3 from 9/21/07 meeting of Task Force: Representative Kulik made a motion, seconded by Representative Bosley, that the Task Force develops language for the establishment of a Massachusetts' milk promotion program.

Discussion: The Acting Commissioner asked for Task Force members to form a subcommittee on the establishment of a Massachusetts Milk Promotion Board. Senator Brewer, Representative Kulik and Mr. William Gillmeister will comprise the Massachusetts Milk Promotion Board Subcommittee.

Mr. William Gillmeister recommended that existing legislation from other states could be modified for the Commonwealth's use. The Department will work with the Milk Promotion Board Subcommittee on the modification and submittal of draft legislation for a State Milk Promotion Board.

Subcommittees/Action Items: Massachusetts Milk Promotion Board Subcommittee

To develop language for the establishment of a Massachusetts Milk Promotion Board-(Motion 3).

Senator Stephan Brewer
Representative Stephan Kulik
Mr. William Gillmeister

Motion 4 from 9/21/07 meeting of Task Force: Mr. Greg Watson made a motion, seconded by Undersecretary Phillip Griffiths, to establish a sub-committee to develop language for a recommendation regarding the provision of funds for research and development of alternative energy production particularly for dairy farms as well as the creation of incentives for the development and adoption of energy efficiency technology and electricity generation on dairy farms.

Discussion: The Acting Commissioner asked for Task Force members to form a subcommittee on energy. Mr. Greg Watson, Senator Michael Knapik, Representative Lewis Evangelidis, Mr. Dwayne Breger and Mr. Gerry Palano will comprise the Energy Subcommittee.

Undersecretary Phillip Griffiths mentioned a discussion he had with Mr. Greg Watson who, along with the department will accept the crafting of the final language and will try to be as comprehensive as possible.

Subcommittees/Action Items: Energy Subcommittee

To develop language for the recommendation regarding the provision of incentive funds for research and development of alternative energy production - (Motion 4).

Mr. Greg Watson
Senator Michael Knapik
Representative Lou Evangelidis
Mr. Dwayne Breger
Mr. Gerry Palano, Department of Agricultural Resources (DAR)

Motion 5 from 9/21/07 meeting of Task Force: Senator Brewer made a motion, seconded by Undersecretary Phillip Griffiths, for the review of possible statutory, regulatory and/or policy adjustment for the utilization of APR and Farm Viability Funds for farms currently under Agricultural Restriction Programs or other related programs.

Discussion: Senator Brewer made mention of the desired transportability from APR and asked for a suggestion on what was needed to be done.

Mr. Bob O'Connor responded by mentioning the difficulties at present with this issue particularly when land is purchased and mentioned the fact that this is a legal issue currently centered on the "public good" wording in the current legislation. He also mentioned the fact that there was an inherent cost of APR to the Commonwealth but recommended that the desired portability could be accomplished through the addition of language to the current legislation and that he would volunteer to send this language.

Representative Kulik mentioned that the legislature had a bill in play right now that dealt with this issue.

Undersecretary Phillip Griffiths mentioned that a summary of this issue was needed for clarification.

Subcommittees/Action Items: The addition of language to allow APR farms access to FVEP funds.

Mr. Robert O'Connor
Department of Agricultural Resources
Agricultural Preservation Restriction Program

Motion 6 from 9/21/07 meeting of Task Force: Senator Brewer made a motion, seconded by Representative Bosley, that the State Treasurer review the possible creation of a Technical Assistance/Capital Improvement low interest loan program for the farming community of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts to sustain the long term viability of Massachusetts's dairy farms.

Discussion: The Acting Commissioner asked for Task Force members to form a subcommittee on the establishment of a Technical Assistance and Low Interest Loan Subcommittee. Senator Stephen Brewer, Senator Michael Knapik, Representative Daniel Bosley, Mr. Robert O'Connor and Undersecretary Phillip Griffiths will comprise the Technical Assistance and Low Interest Loan Subcommittee.

The discussion period continued with Mr. Richard Woodger's mention of the possible reduction on the tax decals currently in force for equipment that may be used outside of farm use.

Mr. William Gillmeister stated that this issue was slightly different. However, it is an important matter and should be an action item to further develop in the future. He also mentioned that an extensive discussion, with Ms. Marylyn Brown, Massachusetts DOR, on these matters and there is already a program to reduce the rate on animals and equipment.

Representative Bosley mentioned, that based on his understanding of existing programs/trust funds, his recommendation is to sit with the State Treasurer to see if money currently exists. He also made mention of the use of the "manufacturing designation" applied to dairy producers to open up more programs to dairy farms as many options already exist but are not currently accessible.

Senator Brewer and Senator Knapik volunteered to meet with the State Treasurer along with Representative Bosley. Undersecretary Phillip Griffiths also volunteered.

Representative Bosley also mentioned that the loan guarantee programs that currently exist along with financing options in the private sector should be reviewed.

Senator Rosenberg asked that a starter list be assembled and mentioned that reductions in property taxes may be difficult but that vehicles may be doable.

Mr. Bob O'Connor recommended a review of the sawmill issue that utilizes a Federal tax free bond that generates a loan.

Subcommittees/Action Items: Low Interest Loan Subcommittee

To review the possibility of the State Treasurer review the creation of a Technical Assistance/Capital Improvement low interest loan program (Motion-7)

Senator Stephan Brewer
Senator Michael Knapik
Representative Daniel Bosley
Mr. Robert O'Connor
Undersecretary Phillip Griffiths

Motion 7 : Mr. Greg Watson made a motion, seconded by Mr. Mark Duffy, to provide technical, administrative, and financial assistance for dairy farmers pursuing commodity milk production and value-added alternatives.

Discussion: Senator Rosenberg asked that a starter list of regulatory issues be created right away if work was going to commence and requested that specifics from farmers on regulatory overkill be assembled and that farmers should work on action items derived from motions 7 and 9.

Mr. Mark Duffy stated that he could work on a list of wants and needs along with Mr. Woodger.

Senator Rosenberg hi-lighted the necessity to integrate this information into the proper sections of the final report.

Subcommittees/Action Items: Develop a starter list for regulatory modifications

Develop a list as a starting point for recommendations for regulatory modifications and select other industry members to submit regulatory issues affecting the dairy industry.

Mr. Mr. Mark Duffy
Mr. Richard Woodger
Other Industry Members

Motion 8 from 9/21/07 meeting of Task Force: Mr. Richard Woodger made a motion, seconded by Senator Rosenberg, 1) to endorse a position within the Department of Agricultural Resources for regulatory review and tracking; 2) to develop a recommendation for the establishment of a committee within EEA consisting of DAR and DEP and other relevant agencies to evaluate and review options for regulatory streamlining for agricultural businesses; 3) contact Department of Revenue and look into and/or review and report on whether the local option may be adjusted for animals and equipment used for dairy production.

Discussion: Acting Commissioner Scott Soares stated that the process of establishing and communicating a job code for a position within the Department of Agricultural Resources for regulatory review and tracking was underway and would be completed shortly.

The discussion continued on the matter of the adjustment of the local option and what possibilities, if any, were possible and the establishment of a committee within EEA.

Subcommittees/Action Items: There were no subcommittees or action items identified.

Acting Commissioner Scott Soares mentioned that motion 8 did not include a vote section in the document.

Motion: Representative Bosley made a motion, seconded by Undersecretary Phillip Griffiths, to amend the September 21 Meeting Minutes document with the discussed changes

Discussion: None

Vote: Unanimous

Motion from 9/21/07 meeting of Task Force 9: Senator Rosenberg made a motion, seconded by Undersecretary Griffiths, that the DAR to consult with Department of Economic Affairs to develop a recommendation to implement a Fair Trade Market Contribution Program.

Discussion: None

Subcommittees/Action Items: There were no subcommittees or action items identified.

Motion 10: Representative Bosley made a motion, seconded by Representative Kulik, that the Task Force develop a refundable income tax credit for the distribution of Dairy Farm Stabilization funds and if the balance is insufficient that the funds come from the general fund.

Discussion: Task Force members were reminded that Motion 10 was to be worked on by the Safety Net Subcommittee along with motion 2.

Subcommittees/Action Items: Safety Net Subcommittee

For the study for the establishment of a Dairy Farm Stabilization Fund-(Motion 2), a review of The Fair Trade Model (Motion 9) and the Refundable Income Tax Credit (Motion 10).

Senator Stanley Rosenberg
Mr. William Gillmeister, Ph.D, DAR
Ms. Lynne Bohan, Processor Representative;
Representative Daniel Bosley, House of Representatives;
Representative Stephen Kulik, House of Representatives
Mr. Mark Duffy, Farmer Representative;

Mr. Brian Houghton, Massachusetts Food Association
Consumer Representative (To be named by the Department)

Motion 11 from 9/21/07 meeting of Task Force: Representative Bosley made a motion, seconded by Representative Kulik, to recommend that funds be provided through the Massachusetts Office of Travel and Tourism (MOTT) to further develop and expand Agri-tourism.

Discussion: Representative Bosley recommended the identification and evaluation of agro-tourism funds and volunteered to contact the MOTT Director to discuss this issue. Undersecretary Phillip Griffiths also offered assistance with this issue.

Subcommittees/Action Items: Contact of the MOTT Director

Contact the MOTT Director to further evaluate the availability of funds for Agro-tourism.

Representative Daniel Bosley
Undersecretary Phillip Griffiths

Motion 12 from 9/21/07 meeting of Task Force: Representative Bosley made a motion, seconded by Representative Kulik, to contact the Massachusetts Office of International Trade and Development to explore foreign trade and investment opportunities for Massachusetts dairy products.

Discussion: Representative Bosley volunteered to meet with MOITI to inquire if they will do some elementary work on possible programs for export and if international trade can be expanded.

Ms. Ellen Fitzgibbons, Representative Bosley and Representative Lewis Evangelidis will contact the USDA for information on export programs.

Subcommittees/Action Items: There were no subcommittees or action items identified.

Motion 13 from 9/21/07 meeting of Task Force: Senator Rosenberg made a motion, seconded by Representative Bosley, to continue the Dairy Revitalization Task Force.

Discussion: There was discussion on the continuity of the Dairy Revitalization Task Force past the October 1, 2007 deadline and the sentiment that there was necessity in the continuation of the Task Force. Senator Knapik inquired as to whether a letter or communication was required authorizing that some vehicle be created to meet quarterly by the Executive Office. Senator Rosenberg furthered this approach by recommending that this body also be responsible for the stabilization fund.

It was agreed, by Task Force members, that a letter be sent requesting an extension to the term of the Task Force and also to communicate a delay in the submittal of the final report to the Legislature.

Acting Commissioner Scott Soares recommended that a delay of 45 days be requested for the delivery of the report. The Task Force discussed this recommendation in length and agreed to the request for extension.

Senator Rosenberg recommended that a letter from the Co-chairs be sent on behalf of the DRTF to the Speaker, Senate President and the clerks of the Senate and House of Representatives to request a six week extension.

Subcommittees/Action Items: Letter requesting extension and authorization of body

Send letter to the Speaker of the House and The Senate President notifying them of the current circumstances and the delay of the report: file legislation

Acting Commissioner Scott Soares
Undersecretary Phillip Griffiths

4. New Business

Acting Commissioner Scott Soares introduced the next issue on the agenda: New Business and asked Task Force members if there was anything new to submit. There were no new issues for discussion.

Acting Commissioner Scott Soares turned the discussion to the scheduling of the next Task Force meetings to take place and the 9th and 16th of November were agreed upon as tentative dates for the next meetings. The meetings are to be held, pending confirmation, at the Lord Jeffery Inn, Amherst, Massachusetts.

5. Public Comment

Mrs. Sherry Hager, Secretary of the MADF, expressed her support of the establishment of a program be set-up long-term in the Commonwealth, similar to the Task Force, and that the establishment of this body was a vital issue for the dairy industry in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

Ms. Cris Coffin of the American Farmland Trust, inquired as to whether the Task force had, in a formal way, weighed in on the farm bill legislation and stressed that it was important, in her view, to formally intervene through the Massachusetts delegates in Washington.

Senator Rosenberg suggested, based on Ms. Coffin's comments, that the Task Force possibly pursue other members of Congress in Washington before the debate and recommended a possible trip to Washington D.C. to meet with members of the specific committees involved and with members such as Senator Leahy of VT. The trip could also be used to push other issues of concern.

Mr. James Larkin and Mr. Jim Larkin, M.A.D. Farmers from Sheffield, Ma, recommended having farmers as part of an ongoing board to identify issues affecting the industry to facilitate modification. He, along with Mr. Jim Larkin, also discussed the USDA numbers and that he had little confidence in these numbers as they did not identify, correctly, the breakdown between owned and rented properties for dairy. He also asked the Task Force that they keep in mind that the dairy farmer's of the commonwealth maintain a tremendous amount of land in the Commonwealth and the USDA numbers do not include

pasture or forested acreage that farmers, for the most part, maintain contributing to wildlife management and conservation in the Commonwealth. Mr. Jim Larkin's assumption was there was currently over 70,000 acres in Massachusetts currently used for dairy.

Mr. William Gillmeister responded that the Task Force had already requested these numbers from the USDA and had stipulated that they be separated between owned and rented land.

Mr. Jim Larkin continued by mentioning that, based on his knowledge, that a loan guarantee program if someone does not qualify for farm credit, already exists and the piggy-back of a state program on top of this current structure would have a greater impact. He stressed this impact by the mention that his animals were suffering due to a lack of investment in technology and the lack of specific programs in the Commonwealth that exist in other states.

Mr. Hager, President of MADF, expressed his concern that he did not hear any mention of the profound benefit dairy farms offered to the economy of the Commonwealth as dairy farms were a business supporting other businesses that provided a great economic backbone of the agricultural infrastructure in Massachusetts and this business network was in great danger.

Mr. Warren Facey, read an excerpt from an article from New Hampshire that hi-lighted the misappropriation of Agricultural funds, in some cases, being attributed to deceased farmers. Mr. Facey recommended that this be another message to bring to Washington D.C. through the delegation.

6. Adjourn

Motion: Senator Knapik made a motion, seconded by Representative Bosley, to adjourn.

Vote: Unanimous

The Meeting adjourned at 2:43 p.m.